



# Town of *Westford* Massachusetts

## Town Manager's Newsletter

December 2014



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Town  
Manager**

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### Dear Westford residents,

The Board of Selectmen and Town Manager's Office cooked our annual holiday breakfast for our seniors at the Cameron Senior Center this month. While feeding approximately 80 seniors, the breakfast provided town officials and staff with an excellent opportunity to serve, eat with, and engage in discussions with our seniors in a festive, welcoming environment. Thank you to all the chefs, along with Director of Elder Services Joanne Sheehan, Outreach Coordinator Annetter Cerullo and all of the volunteers at the Cameron Senior Center who helped make this annual event possible. Also this month our Westford Firefighters provided a delicious Ham and Bean Supper, another enjoyable annual event for our seniors in our community. Joanne Sheehan stated "This annual event is one that they all look forward to attending. It was a huge success with many great compliments!"



*Selectmen Scott Hazelton, Kelly Ross and Don Siriani,  
Assistant Town Manager John Mangiaratti,  
Project/Procurement Specialist Matt Hanson*

Staying on the topic of food, I have exciting news to share from our newly reinvigorated Agricultural Commission. They recently filmed a 3-minute musical parody of the song "Let It Go" from the Disney movie, *Frozen*, about the local food movement. Their song is called "Let Us Grow", naturally. They assembled over 60 residents from 8 to 88 to sing the chorus and support their lead singers. It was produced into a video and entered into a national contest held by a program that funds grants to community gardens. I am delighted to announce that they won this contest, and intend to use the prize money to help fund supplies for future community agricultural projects in town, such as the Community Gardens recently approved by the Conservation Commission. Thank you to the Ag Com members and volunteer participants for this great effort! Here is a link to their winning video: [Let Us Grow](#).



I am pleased to announce that our hard working volunteers of Sustainable Westford and their Director Gloria Gilbert, in collaboration with the Westford Academy Student Council, have helped address the issue of public access to clean drinking water.

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The photo to the right shows one of the new Westford Academy bottle filling stations. The link below provides great detail on how these bottle filling stations are saving plastic and reducing waste: <http://becausewater.org/bottle-filling-stations/westford-academy-bottle-filling-stations-give-hope-saving-plastic/>. It is estimated that over 20,000 plastic bottles have been saved with the installation of two bottle filling stations. More information on Sustainable Westford may be viewed on their website [www.SustainableWestford.org](http://www.SustainableWestford.org).



At their December 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Selectmen voted unanimously to support three new requests from the Recycling Commission:

- 1) Reduce the number of bags/barrels collected weekly from each household from the current 5 to 3 effective February 1, 2015
- 2) Recommend to residents that they buy trash containers no larger than 32 gallons when they need to replace their receptacles
- 3) Reduce the price of bulk item stickers from \$10 to \$5 effective February 1<sup>st</sup> (bulk items include furniture, carpeting and other items too large to fit in a barrel)

Stay tuned for public notices on these new procedures, and more information on trash and recycling guidelines may be found on the following link to the Recycling Commission website: [Westford Recycling](#).

Our Economic Development Committee began a collaboration with Northeastern University's Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy and the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) to participate in a Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool (EDSAT) program. EDSAT was developed by the Dukakis Center and is a secure and confidential online self-assessment mechanism for evaluating and interpreting a municipal jurisdiction's characteristics which are directly linked to the factors affecting local investment. EDSAT will enhance our efforts to create positive change in policies and procedures and help us to establish a practical set of tools to better position us to attract appropriate businesses to our town. The EDSAT process is expected to start in early 2015 and take approximately 3-6 months to complete.

Over the past year, Westford was fortunate to realize strong growth in property values for both residential and commercial properties. At the November 18<sup>th</sup> Selectmen's meeting, the Selectmen voted to reduce the single tax rate to \$16.24/thousand (down from \$16.60), along with continuing the small commercial exemption at 10%.

I am delighted to announce that the Selectmen voted to accept a generous \$50,000 gift from the new Circle Health/Lowell General facility across Route 110 from Cornerstone Square to support our Westford Health Department initiatives for residents and town employees.

Pat Matheson, long time Library Assistant at the J.V. Fletcher Library, retired after 25 years of service to our town. The Selectmen presented Pat with a certificate of appreciation at their November 18<sup>th</sup> meeting. I would also like to thank Pat for her outstanding service and wish her good health and much happiness in her retirement.

Westford Scout Troop 159 welcomes two new Eagle Scouts this month; Brandon Datar and Taha Rangwala. Thanks to both young men for their dedication to scouting and to community service. The Selectmen presented certificates to the Eagle Scouts at their Eagle Court of Honor ceremonies, and I had the pleasure of presenting letters of appreciation to Taha Rangwala and to the father of Brandon Datar at their meeting on December 9<sup>th</sup>.

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The Selectmen voted to initiate a new committee this month, the Town Center Parking and Traffic Study Committee. The committee will consist of four resident representatives, two alternates and one member of each of the following committees; Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Pedestrian Safety Committee, Historical Commission and the Common Restoration Committee. The draft charge of the committee is to work with town staff to develop conceptual designs for traffic circulation, parking, and pedestrian safety improvements in the town center, using the Town Center Traffic and Parking Study completed by the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments as a basis for discussion. The committee will report back to the Selectmen with their recommendations. Interested residents are encouraged to complete a Citizen's Activity application form, available online at: <http://data.westfordma.gov/bc>.

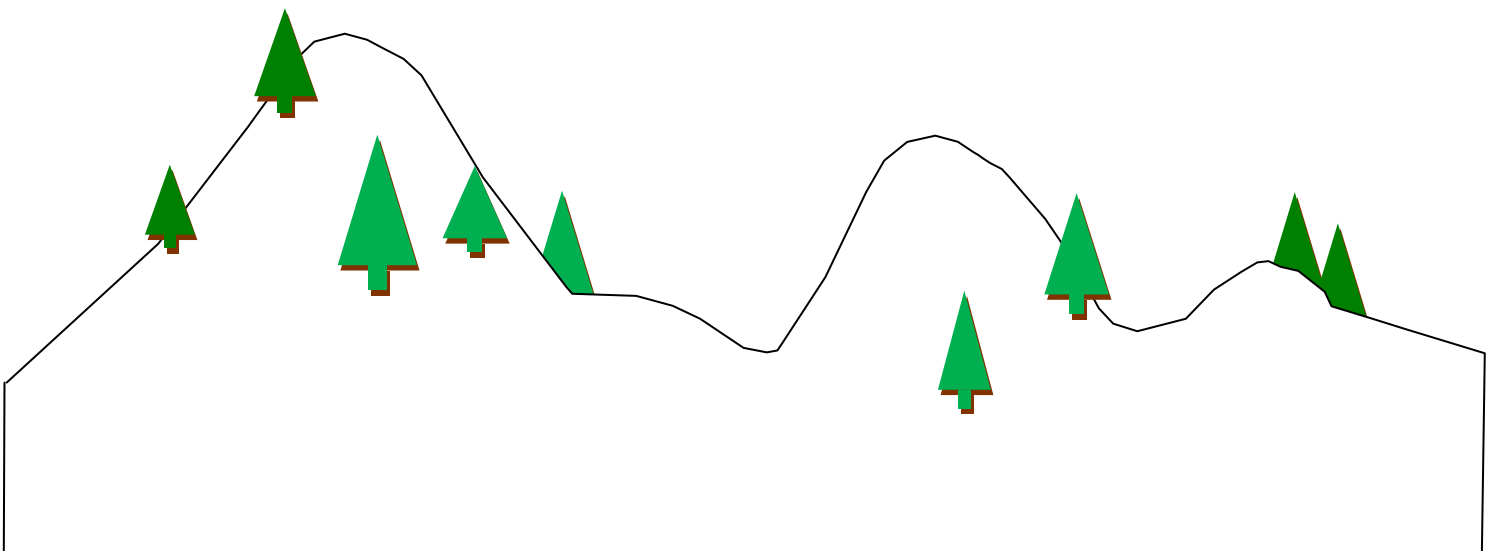
The Board of Selectmen is looking for multiple members to join the newly re-established Arts and Technology Scholarship Committee. This committee is charged with creating a grant program to fund innovative initiatives that enhance the curriculum of the Westford Public School and administering a scholarship program to help provide financial aid for Westford students attending college.

Three new volunteers joined town committees this month. I would like to welcome Vincent Florek to the Energy Committee, Kristen Grueter to the Affordable Housing Committee, and Jeff Hillam as an Alternate to the Economic Development Committee.

There are several openings on other local boards and committees, including the Bylaw Review, Communications Advisory, Cultural Council, Historical Commission, Public Works Initiative Committee, and others, and I urge you to peruse our website for information about the work of these committees. If you have interest, please complete a Citizen's Activity form at this link: [Citizen Activity Form](#) or stop by and fill out a form in the town manager's office.

I wish you all a very happy holiday season.

Sincerely,



## J.V. Fletcher Library

### The J. V. Fletcher Library's Annual Staff Recommendations for holiday gift giving and/or reading for pleasure



#### FICTION:

**All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr.** At six years old Marie Laure goes blind. Her father builds her a miniature model which is an exact replica of their neighborhood in Paris so she can memorize it with her fingers and then, after years of practice, find her way in the world outside of their apartment. When Germany occupies Paris during WWII, father and daughter escape Saint-Malo on the Brittany coast. In another world in Germany, an orphaned boy named Werner becomes enchanted by a crude radio that he unexpectedly stumbles across. After he masters building and fixing radios, Werner wins a place at an elite and brutal German military academy. Ultimately though, his conscience leads him to become a specialized tracker for the Resistance and to Saint-Malo where his story and Marie-Laure's converge. Doerr's novel, 10 years in the making, is a dazzling *tour de force*.

**Big Little Lies by Liane Moriarty.** "*Big Little Lies* is a brilliant take on ex-husbands and second wives, mothers and daughters, schoolyard scandals and the dangerous little lies we tell ourselves just to survive." (GoodReads)

**Nora Webster: a Novel by Colm Toibin.** Forty years old and the mother of four, Nora suddenly finds herself a widow. Losing the love of her life sends her life crashing and she doesn't know if she can survive the pain or find a way for her family to survive. So focused on her own grief and fear, she can't see what the loss of their father is doing to her sons. She begins to sing again, something she hasn't done for years and eventually finds a way back to herself.

#### NON-FICTION:

**Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End by Atul Gawande.** Bestselling author and practicing surgeon, Atul Gawande, explores how medical professionals should handle the end of life process with their patients. He illustrates how his field is currently limited in what they can do to provide comfort and argues that a doctor's first priority should be quality of life, not just extension of life.

**The Confidence Code: The Science and Art of Self-Assurance-What Women Should Know by Katty Kay and Claire Shipman.** Are we born with confidence or is a learned trait? Studies have shown that women tend to be less confident than men and the media, stereotypes, self-doubt, etc. all feed into this negative perception. Kay and Shipman provide an informative manual for women on how to build confidence and succeed in the workplace.

**10% Happier: How I Tamed the Voice in My Head, Reduced Stress Without Losing My Edge, and Found Self-Help That Actually Works--A True Story by Dan Harris.** Many of us are looking for a way to manage stress and be more content with our lives. Dan Harris (co-anchor of Nightline and weekend host of Good Morning America) believes he has found the key to happiness through meditation. In this engaging memoir, he details his own struggles and the on-air incident that finally convinced him that he needed to change his life.

#### CHILDREN:

**The Book With No Pictures by B.J. Novak (Picture Book).** How can a Picture Book without any illustrations be any fun? Perhaps it's when the words on the page are so silly and goofy that children can't help but burst into giggles. This New York Times bestseller is sure to be a hit with the little ones on your list.

**Creature Features: Twenty-Five Animals Explain Why They Look the Way They Do by Steve Jenkins (Non-Fiction).** A fun, fact-filled book told in the voice of each animal who is "answering" questions about their physical attributes. Accompanied with beautiful illustrations, this book is a teaching aid as well as a feast for the eyes.

**Two by Kathryn Otoshi (Picture Book).** A book about counting that also explores the complex nature of friendship when a group of two becomes a group of three. This story will help children cope with the social dynamics of friendships.

#### TEENS:

**The Cracks in the Kingdom (part of the "Colours of Madeleine" Series) by Jaclyn Moriarty.** "Moriarty chronicles the ever-intertwining lives of Cambridge resident Madeline Tully and her secret correspondent Elliot Baranski, a quick-witted farm boy from the Kingdom of Cello. Mixed in with the regal intrigue is a complex, moving look at families, friendship, and loss." (School Library Journal)

**Fleabrain Loves Franny by Joanne Rocklin.** It is 1952 and Franny Katzenback is recovering from polio. She reads *Charlotte's Web* and wishes for her own special friend. Isolated and lonely, she befriends Fleabrain, a flea who lives on her dog's tail. Fleabrain is an avid reader and through his retelling of stories, Fleabrain and Franny have many exciting adventures together.

## **C o u n c i l   O n   A g i n g   -   C o m i n g   E v e n t s**

### **POT LUCK DINNER/YANKEE SWAP**

At Cameron on Tuesday, December 16th at 5 PM.

Doors open at 4 PM for set-up and warming of dishes. Clearly label your dishes and serving utensils with your name for take home. Also label what the food is that you are bringing. Avoid ingredients that may cause allergies such as peanuts. Call for your reservation and let us know what you plan to bring, such as chicken casserole, meatballs, tossed salad or ice cream.

We are in need of appetizers, entrees, side dishes, and desserts.

Coffee, Tea and water will be provided.

At 6 PM we will hold a Yankee Swap (sure to be some laughs) for all who bring a new wrapped gift under \$10 in value.

Please register by calling 978-692-5523.

### **NEW YEAR'S EVE DAY LUNCHEON**

Our Fifth Annual New Year's Eve Day Luncheon will be held on Wednesday, December 31st at 11:30 AM at Cameron.

The luncheon will consist of ham, potato salad, vegetables, greens salad, rolls, and dessert.

Fee for luncheon is \$2.

Ring in the New Year with us by registering by December 19th at 978-692-5523.

Volunteers for food preparation and table set-up please arrive at 9:30 AM on December 31st.

### **LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM**

Friday, January 9th at 12:15 pm.

**New Gadgets:** "It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity."  
(Albert Einstein)

If you get any new gadgets (i.e. tablets, new phones, new cameras or computers) over the holidays that you don't know how to use?

Please register for the Lunch and Learn Program's at 978 692 5523 two business days ahead so that we can plan for food.

**To view the complete  
Council On Aging Newsletter  
please visit our website at:**

**[www.westfordma.gov/coa](http://www.westfordma.gov/coa) and click on [Newsletters](#).**



## Recycling Commission

### HOLIDAY RECYCLING REMINDERS

Holiday season activities generate a large amount of recyclable material. Massachusetts state environmental regulations ban recyclables from trash. As a reminder, the Westford Recycling Commission asks residents to recycle all they can. Recycling saves Westford money by diverting trash from the incinerator.

- Recycle your cardboard gift boxes, garment boxes, toy and game packing cardboard, clean food boxes, beverage cartons, and shipping boxes. All cardboard must be flattened and no larger than 3 feet by 3 feet in size.
- Recycle your gift wrap paper (not foils), tissue paper, and paper tags, bags, cards, decorations, and envelopes. Recycle your newspapers, ads, and catalogs.
- Recycle your clean, clear, and colored bottles, jars, aluminum and steel cans, aluminum foil, and plastic containers marked #1- #7. Styrofoam is not acceptable.
- On your recycling day, put recyclables in bins, boxes, or totes at the curb by 7 a.m. and separate them from your trash containers. All recyclables can be mixed together.

If you need a "Recyclables" sticker, they are available at the Town Clerk's. For more current recycling information, visit

**Note:** If your normal trash and recycling pick up day is Thursday (Christmas Day and New Year's Day), your pick up day will be Friday.

If your pick up day is Friday on these weeks, your pickups will be on Saturday.

**News flash:** Bulk item stickers are now \$5, reduced from \$10. Refer to Bulk Items & Policy button at [www.westfordma.gov/recycling](http://www.westfordma.gov/recycling) as well as for all current information.



## **Water Department**

### **Fire Hydrants**

We need your help in keeping the fire hydrants free from snow! With over 1,000 hydrants in town it takes us considerable time to get to them all after each major snow storm. The more help we get from folks the quicker we can get them cleared and easily accessible in the event of an emergency. The last thing anyone wants is to have to search for a buried hydrant during an emergency.

Also—please remember that: In accordance with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 148 Section 27B it is unlawful to pile, push, or plow snow or ice on or against any fire hydrant in any public or private way. Please make sure not to shovel, plow, or blow snow onto the hydrants when clearing your property!



### **Water Meters**

Water meters need to be replaced every 15 years according to accepted performance standards. When you receive a letter from the Water Department indicating the need to replace your meter, please contact the Water Department as soon as possible to schedule an appointment. Replacement of the meter takes about 30 minutes and is performed at no charge to you. With several hundred meters to change per year your cooperation is crucial for us to get this done!

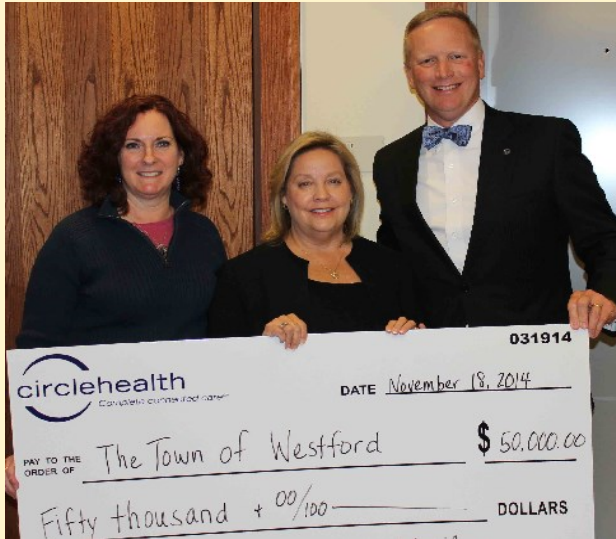


**[WWW.WESTFORDMA.GOV/WATER](http://WWW.WESTFORDMA.GOV/WATER)**

## Health Department News

### **HEALTH DEPARTMENT RECEIVES \$50,000 GRANT FROM CIRCLE HEALTH**

The Westford Health Department was elated to receive a grant of \$50,000 from Circle Health and Lowell General Hospital to assist with funding health services in 2015. Circle Health is a progressive collaboration of physicians, hospitals, other health providers and organizations with a shared vision for empowering people and communities to be healthier. Lowell General Hospital is an independent, not-for-profit, community hospital serving the Greater Lowell area and surrounding communities.



*(l to r) Joanne Martel, Board of Health member and Sandy Collins R.N., Health Director, receive gift from Lowell General Hospital President Jody White.*

The services that are developed and provided by the Westford Health Department are intended to improve the health and wellness of Westford residents and employees. The grant generously supplied by Circle Health and Lowell General Hospital will be an immeasurable help in providing identified needed services and programs. Watch for details!

### **HEALTH DEPARTMENT RECEIVES FOOD INSPECTION SERVICES GRANT**

The Westford Health Department received a grant for \$1,996.00 from the FDA Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards grant program. The grant award will be used to send Westford's Food inspector and Health Agent to a two day training seminar on conducting "Risk-Based Inspections at Retail". This training will help build upon techniques that apply foundational concepts related to risk-based inspections and to evaluate the relative public health risk of various inspections. The department has implemented a high risk inspectional program and is working to meet FDA standards to ensure the department provides the highest level of food inspections for the community.



### **FLU SHOTS STILL AVAILABLE**

Although our clinics public flu clinics are now over, vaccinations are still available by appointment only. Please call 978 692- 2548 if you are still in need!

## Health Department News

### UPPER MERRIMACK VALLEY MEDICAL RESERVE HAS SUCCESSFUL TRAINING DAY

The Health Department recently held a successful training day for over 90 members of our UVMRC response team at Middlesex Community College. Members, comprised of both medical and non-medical volunteers, received training on emergency response, sheltering, autism, Alzheimer disease, communications, social media, and burn care. Volunteers attend the free trainings to become better first responders while helping their communities in time of need. If interested in becoming a member, please call 978 399- 2549 for more information.



### So Let's Talk about Drinking

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism defines **binge drinking** as a pattern of drinking that brings blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels to 0.08 g/dL. This typically occurs after 4 drinks for women and 5 drinks for men—in about 2 hours.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration defines **heavy drinking** as drinking 5 or more drinks on the same occasion on each of 5 or more days in the past 30 days.

According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, **moderate drinking** is up to 1 drink per day for women and up to 2 drinks per day for men.

***If you choose to drink, drink moderately.***

***Heart disease:*** Once thought of as a threat mainly to men, heart disease also is the leading killer of women in the United States. Drinking moderately may lower the risk for coronary heart disease, mainly among women over age 55. However, there are other factors that reduce the risk of heart disease, including a healthy diet, exercise, not smoking, and keeping a healthy weight. Moderate drinking provides little, if any, net health benefit for younger people. (Heavy drinking can actually damage the heart.)

So with this in mind, let's **Celebrate with Care** during the upcoming Holiday season.